

IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (currently amended) A method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone, comprising the steps of:

receiving a voicemail message at a central location; and

sending, while said off-hook telephone is already participating in an established telephone call, a visual message waiting indicator signal from said the central location and destined for said the off-hook telephone, said visual message waiting indicator signal including call related information relating to a caller who left said voicemail message.

2. (currently amended) A method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 1, wherein said the step of sending said the visual message waiting indicator signal includes the steps of comprises:

alerting said the off-hook telephone, while said off-hook telephone is participating in an established telephone call, to an upcoming transmission of said the visual message waiting indicator signal; and

transmitting said the visual message waiting indicator signal at a time period after said the alerting step but while said off-hook telephone remains in said established telephone call.

3. (currently amended) A method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 2, further comprising: the step of

receiving an acknowledgement signal relating to a status of said the off-hook telephone as being ready to receive said the visual message waiting indicator signal prior to the said transmitting step.

4. (currently amended) A method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 3, wherein:
~~the~~

said time period of said ~~the~~ transmitting step is based on receipt of
said ~~the~~ acknowledgment signal.

5. (currently amended) A method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 3, wherein:
~~the~~

said predetermined time is associated with a muting period of said
~~the~~ off-hook telephone.

6. (currently amended) A method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 1, wherein
said ~~the~~ step of sending comprises: includes

transmitting caller ID data associated with a party that left said ~~the~~
voicemail message.

7. (currently amended) A method of receiving a visual message waiting indicator signal in an off-hook telephone, comprising ~~the~~ steps of:

transitioning to ~~being in~~ an off-hook condition;

establishing a telephone call while in said off-hook condition; and

receiving a visual message waiting indicator signal during said
established telephone call, said visual message waiting indicator signal including
call related information relating to a caller who left a voicemail message.

8. (currently amended) A method of receiving a visual message waiting indicator signal in an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 7, further comprising: ~~the step of~~

displaying a visual message waiting indicator based on said ~~the~~ received visual message waiting indicator signal.

9. (currently amended) A method of receiving a visual message waiting indicator signal in an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 8, wherein ~~said the~~ displaying step comprises: ~~includes~~

displaying caller ID data associated with a messaging party.

10. (currently amended) A method of receiving a visual message waiting indicator signal in an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 7, further comprising: ~~the step of~~

receiving an alert signal; ~~[[.]]~~

wherein said ~~the~~ visual message waiting indicator signal is received at a time period after said ~~the~~ alert signal is received.

11. (currently amended) A method of receiving a visual message waiting indicator signal in an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 10, further comprising: ~~the step of~~

transmitting an acknowledgement signal in response to said ~~the~~ alert signal.

12. (currently amended) A method of receiving a visual message waiting indicator signal in an off-hook telephone as recited in claim 11, wherein: ~~the~~

said time period is based on receipt of said ~~the~~ acknowledgement signal.

13. (currently amended) A telephone, comprising:
a visual message waiting indicator; and
an interface unit adapted to couple said ~~the~~ telephone to a network,
such that said ~~the~~ telephone is in an off-hook condition when coupled to said ~~the~~
network and engaged in a communication activity, and is in an on-hook condition
when coupled to said ~~the~~ network and not engaged in a communication activity,
wherein said ~~the~~ interface unit is adapted to receive a visual
message waiting indicator signal when said telephone is participating in an
established telephone call and in said ~~the~~ off-hook condition, said visual
message waiting indicator signal including call related information relating to a
caller who left a voicemail message.

14. (currently amended) A telephone as recited in claim 13, further
comprising:
a muting mechanism adapted to mute a transducer in association
with ~~the~~ receipt of said ~~the~~ visual message waiting indicator signal.

15. (currently amended) A telephone as recited in claim 14,
wherein ~~the~~ said transducer comprises:
a microphone.

16. (currently amended) A telephone as recited in claim 14,
wherein said ~~the~~ transducer comprises:
a speaker.

17. (currently amended) A telephone as recited in claim 14,
wherein: ~~the~~
said muting mechanism is adapted to mute said ~~the~~ transducer in
response to an alert signal.

18. (currently amended) A telephone switch, comprising:

a message storage unit adapted to receive a voicemail message associated with a telephone when said ~~the~~ telephone is in an off-hook condition; and

a visual message waiting indicator signal transmission unit adapted to transmit a visual message waiting indicator signal to said ~~the~~ telephone while said telephone is participating in an established telephone call while in an ~~the~~ off-hook condition, said visual message waiting indicator signal including call related information relating to a caller who left said voicemail message.

19. (currently amended) A telephone switch as recited in claim 18, further comprising:

an alerting unit adapted to transmit an alerting signal to said ~~the~~ telephone prior to transmitting said ~~the~~ visual message waiting indicator signal.

20. (currently amended) A telephone switch as recited in claim 19, further comprising:

an acknowledgement receiving unit adapted to receive an acknowledgement signal in response to said ~~the~~ alerting signal and prior to transmitting said ~~the~~ visual message waiting indicator signal.

21. (new) The method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone according to claim 1, wherein:

said call related information is CallerID information.

22. (new) The method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone according to claim 1, wherein said visual message waiting indicator signal further comprises:

a length of said voicemail message.

23. (new) The method of providing a visual message waiting indicator signal to an off-hook telephone according to claim 1, wherein said visual message waiting indicator signal further comprises:

a textual depiction of a portion of said voicemail message.